

# Survey of Connecticut Superintendents – January 2012 – DRAFT

## Demographics

1. Please select the number of years you have served as a superintendent in Connecticut.
  - a. 0-5 years – (41.3%)
  - b. 6-10 years – (31.5%)
  - c. Over 10 years – (27.3%)
2. Have you been a superintendent in more than one district in Connecticut?
  - a. Yes – (35.7%)
  - b. No – (64.3%)
3. What is the student enrollment in your district?
  - a. 0- 2,500 students – (49.0%)
  - b. 2,500-5,000 students – (31.5%)
  - c. Over 5,000 students – (19.6%)
4. How would you characterize your district?
  - a. Urban – (15.4%)
  - b. Suburban – (59.4%)
  - c. Other – (25.2%)
5. What is the percentage of Black/African-American students in your district?
  - a. 0% - 20% -- (84.6%)
  - b. > 20% - 40% -- (10.5%)
  - c. > 40% - 60% -- (3.5%)
  - d. > 60% - 80% -- (0.7%)
  - e. > 80% -- (0.7%)
6. What is the percentage of Hispanic / Latino students in your district?
  - a. 0% - 20% -- (86.0%)
  - b. > 20% - 40% -- (9.1%)
  - c. > 40% - 60% -- (3.5%)
  - d. > 60% - 80% -- (1.4%)
  - e. > 80% -- (0.0%)
7. What percentage of your district's students is eligible for free or reduced price lunch?
  - a. 0 - 25% -- (67.1%)
  - b. > 25% - 50% -- (21.0%)
  - c. > 50% - 75% -- (7.0%)
  - d. > 75% -- (4.9%)
8. What is your anticipated per pupil expenditure level this year?
  - a. \$10,000-\$12,500 – (39.9%)
  - b. \$12,501-\$15,000 – (46.2%)
  - c. \$15,501-\$17,750 – (7.7%)

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- d. \$17,751-\$20,000 – (4.9%)
- e. \$20,001-\$22,500 – (1.4%)

## Collaboration and Communication

9. SDE's organizational structure is clear and well-organized around the right priorities.
- a. strongly agree – (3.0%)
  - b. agree – (21.8%)
  - c. neutral – (25.6%)
  - d. disagree – (38.3%)
  - e. strongly disagree – (11.3%)

9. SDE communicates clearly with districts and schools.

- a. strongly agree – (3.8%)
- b. agree – (32.3%)
- c. neutral – (24.1%)
- d. disagree – (32.3%)
- e. strongly disagree – (7.5%)

10. Which of the following SDE divisions have you worked with in the last year?

- a. Student Assessment – (66.2%)
- b. Data Collection, Research & Evaluation – (63.2%)
- c. Information Technology – (27.1%)
- d. Teaching & Learning – (63.9%)
- e. Accountability & Improvement – (51.1%)
- f. Educator Standards & Certification – (78.9%)
- g. Special Education – (72.2%)
- h. Choice Programs – (33.8%)
- i. Health / Nutrition Family Services & Adult Education – (34.6%)
- j. Human Resources – (9.8%)
- k. School Facilities – (63.9%)
- l. Grants Management – (71.4%)
- m. Fiscal Services – (34.6%)
- n. CT Technical High School System – (8.3%)
- o. Other – (5.3%)

11. Of the SDE divisions you have worked with in the last year, which do you find most helpful?

- a. Student Assessment – (29.9%)
- b. Data Collection, Research & Evaluation – (18.9%)
- c. Information Technology – (4.7%)

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- d. Teaching & Learning – (24.4%)
- e. Accountability & Improvement – (20.5%)
- f. Educator Standards & Certification – (37.8%)
- g. Special Education – (25.2%)
- h. Choice Programs – (9.4%)
- i. Health / Nutrition Family Services & Adult Education – (11.0%)
- j. Human Resources – (3.9%)
- k. School Facilities – (22.8%)
- l. Grants Management – (29.1%)
- m. Fiscal Services – (14.2%)
- n. CT Technical High School System – (1.6%)
- o. Other – (8.7%)

12. If applicable, please describe why the SDE divisions you selected in the previous question are helpful.

Respondents: 68

Slightly under half of the respondents indicated that employees in SDE divisions are helpful because they are responsive.

13. Which SDE divisions do you find least helpful?

- a. Student Assessment – (12.8%)
- b. Data Collection, Research & Evaluation – (23.1%)
- c. Information Technology – (19.2%)
- d. Teaching & Learning – (23.1%)
- e. Accountability & Improvement – (19.2%)
- f. Educator Standards & Certification – (19.2%)
- g. Special Education – (20.5%)
- h. Choice Programs – (20.5%)
- i. Health / Nutrition Family Services & Adult Education – (7.7%)
- j. Human Resources – (3.8%)
- k. School Facilities – (20.5%)
- l. Grants Management – (5.1%)
- m. Fiscal Services – (3.8%)
- n. CT Technical High School System – (3.8%)
- o. Other – (14.1%)

14. If applicable, please describe why the SDE divisions you selected in the previous question are not helpful.

Respondents: 45

Answers varied and ranged from communication to strong connection with districts to compliance focus to timeliness to leadership.

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15. Overall, do you find the information you need on SDE's website?

- a. yes – (33.3%)
- b. somewhat – (56.8%)
- c. no – (9.8%)

16. Our district's Regional Education Service Center (RESC) provides valuable resources and support to improve student learning.

- a. strongly agree – (36.8%)
- b. agree – (43.6%)
- c. neutral – (11.3%)
- d. disagree – (3.8%)
- e. strongly disagree – (4.5%)

17. Our RESC is a partner in our efforts to close the achievement gap.

- a. strongly agree – (23.3%)
- b. agree – (38.3%)
- c. neutral – (24.8%)
- d. disagree – (9.0%)
- e. strongly disagree – (4.5%)

18. How could your RESC do more to support you and your district?

Respondents: 60

Roughly one third of the superintendents who responded had positive comments to say about their RESCs but the remaining superintendents surveyed suggested, among other things, that RESCs could help coordinate alternative education and provide dropout prevention support as well as be more collaborative and responsive to districts. Additionally, some superintendents suggested that the SDE support RESCs in re-evaluating and understanding their role in respect to the district they serve.

20. Compared to ten years ago, the state of public education in Connecticut has:

- a. significantly improved – (3.2%)
- b. improved – (33.3%)
- c. not changed – (16.7%)
- d. declined – (36.5%)
- e. significantly declined – (10.3%)

21. Compared to other states, how would you describe Connecticut students' readiness to enter college and the workforce?

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- a. more prepared – (25.2%)
- b. equally prepared – (61.8%)
- c. less prepared – (13.0%)

22. I am optimistic about our state's ability to improve public education.

- a. very optimistic – (19.1%)
- b. optimistic – (42.0%)
- c. neutral – (13.7%)
- d. somewhat optimistic – (16.0%)
- e. not optimistic – (9.2%)

### Governance and Accountability

23. I have a good understanding of the expectations set forth by SDE regarding student achievement.

- a. strongly agree – (18.3%)
- b. agree – (50.4%)
- c. neutral – (18.3%)
- d. disagree – (11.5%)
- e. strongly disagree – (1.5%)

24. Overall, I have the authority and discretion I need to raise student achievement in my district.

- a. strongly agree – (29.8%)
- b. agree – (45.8%)
- c. neutral – (12.2%)
- d. disagree – (9.2%)
- e. strongly disagree – (3.1%)

25. If you responded “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” what barriers prevent you from doing your job?

Respondents: 14

Frequently cited responses include insufficient funding, legislative mandates, teacher contracts / unions, and state and federal initiatives that treat all districts the same. Respondents also reference local boards of education as a barrier. In particular, local boards that micromanage district operations and resist change serve as a barrier.

26. SDE issues regulations:

- a. too much – (66.9%)

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- b. as much as necessary – (33.1%)
- c. infrequently – (0.0%)

27. Which SDE regulations or requirements do you find burdensome? Which of them could be streamlined or eliminated?

Respondents: 80

The top regulation or requirement from Superintendents who responded, specifically mentioned the School Climate/Bullying Law (33%) as burdensome. The second most frequently cited regulation or requirement is around data to be streamlined (20%); then Special Education burden of proof (18%); then unfunded mandates (16%)

28. Overall, I consider SDE a partner in helping to ensure the academic success of our district's students.

- a. strongly agree – (9.2%)
- b. agree – (36.9%)
- c. neutral – (29.2%)
- d. disagree – (16.9%)
- e. strongly disagree – (7.7%)

### Policies and Initiatives

29. I understand the impact of the Education Reform Act passed during the 2010 legislative session.

- a. yes – (75.8%)
- b. somewhat – (21.9%)
- c. no – (2.3%)

30. Is SDE helping to close the achievement gap in your district?

- a. yes – (8.6%)
- b. somewhat – (38.3%)
- c. no – (53.1%)

31. If you answered "somewhat" or "no" to the question above, what is the most important thing SDE can do to help close the achievement gap?

Respondents: 77

- **Eliminate "one size fits all" approach:** Several school districts (primarily identified as suburban or other), mentioned SDE currently promotes and uses a "one-size fits all" model to address the achievement gap. Many reported the

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achievement gap is not a high priority in their district but feel forced to deal with it because it's a high priority on the SDE agenda.

- **Increase targeted program funding:** Several superintendents, primarily those that identified as representing an urban district, indicated that SDE should provide additional funding for universal pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, additional pre-school slots, and instructional specialist positions. Respondents indicated these solutions could help give students across racial and economic groups a fair opportunity to succeed early in their school years.
- **School funding:** Superintendents provided several suggestions, including addressing the ECS formula with the General Assembly, equalizing funding across the state, providing grants to districts, and increasing state contributions for education.
- **SDE relationships with districts:** Districts expressed strained relationships with SDE and feeling overwhelmed with compliance measures and regulations. Respondents report not feeling supported by SDE consultants. More than one superintendent recognized the limited SDE workforce but suggested assigning a consultant to work closely with each district or region. Superintendents recommend SDE provide the following support to districts:
  - More resources and adaptive support
  - Consistent and timely guidance
  - Teaching and learning support
  - Exemption from NCLB regulatory barriers, specifically high-achieving districts
  - Support to Non-Title I schools not making AYP
- **Professional development support:** Several superintendents responded that SDE needs to dedicate additional funds for substantive professional development opportunities to districts, specifically to close the achievement gap and raise educational standards. Many of these same districts suggested that doing so would help increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom and raise achievement overall. One district suggested, “offer high level workshops done by real practitioners who have assisted in closing the achievement gap.” Another responded it would be helpful to provide more professional development in instruction, school structures, and leadership that lead to increased performance of Black and Latino students.

32. SDE must do more to increase access to early childhood education.

- a. strongly agree – (64.2%)
- b. agree – (28.5%)
- c. neutral – (5.7%)
- d. disagree – (0.8%)

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- e. strongly disagree – (0.8%)
33. If your district is required to implement a School Governance Council, how would you rate SDE's effectiveness in assisting you with implementation?
- a. very effective – (1.6%)
  - b. effective – (12.7%)
  - c. neutral – (76.2%)
  - d. ineffective – (4.8%)
  - e. very ineffective – (4.8%)
34. The state's special education policies enable me to serve students with special needs effectively.
- a. strongly agree – (2.5%)
  - b. agree – (33.1%)
  - c. neutral – (24.0%)
  - d. disagree – (29.8%)
  - e. strongly disagree – (10.7%)
35. How would you rate SDE's resources to help schools serve English Language Learners?
- a. very effective – (1.7%)
  - b. effective – (18.8%)
  - c. neutral – (62.4%)
  - d. ineffective – (14.5%)
  - e. very ineffective – (2.6%)
36. Do you think SDE is effective in building the state's technical schools into first-rate institutions?
- a. yes – (9.6%)
  - b. somewhat – (54.4%)
  - c. no – (36.0%)
37. CAPSS recently released a [report](#) with recommendations to transform Connecticut's education system. Select the top three recommendations you think are most important:
- a. Raising the Bar: Establish globally competitive, internationally benchmarked standards in language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening), science, social studies, world languages and the arts. (42.3%)
  - b. Make it Personal: Personalize learning to give all students the opportunity to learn at high levels. (32.5%)



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- c. Start with Early Childhood: Make quality early childhood experiences available to all three- and four-year-olds in order to get all children ready to learn as they enter kindergarten. (65.9%)
  - d. Retool Assessments and Accountability: De-emphasize standardized tests and create new methods of assessments to give students choices for how and when they demonstrate their knowledge and skills. (44.7%)
  - e. Offer More Options and Choices: Increase diversity, flexibility and autonomy in school districts to better address the needs and interests of all students. (15.4%)
  - f. Reform Leadership: Realign Connecticut's education system for success by making authority and responsibility equal. (25.2%)
  - g. Boost Quality: Attract, develop, support and retain teachers and principals of the highest quality. (28.5%)
  - h. Involve Students and Parents: Engage parents, caregivers and community organizations as partners in a child's education. (5.7%)
  - i. Leverage Technology: Use technology to transform teaching and learning. (21.1%)
  - j. Continue the Transformation Process: Ensure that transformation is a continuous process, not a one-time event. (18.7%)
38. Within the top three subject areas you selected in question 37, please identify the specific recommendations enumerated on pages 26-33 of the CAPSS report that you think are most important. If you need a copy of the report, please go to <http://www.ctnexted.org/> and under "Reports" click on "Summary of Proposals" to download the document.

Respondents: 53

Recommendation 26 received the most responses.

**Within *Start with Early Childhood*: The state legislature should ensure a simplified, coordinated system for supporting Early Childhood Development and Education.** (A) Eliminate overlapping oversight and support of early childhood education at state and local levels. (B) Provide transparent and understandable information about the quality of services and programs to parents and the community. (C) Provide models and training to local communities on effective transitions to kindergarten. (D) Provide guidance and support to local communities in raising the quality of early childhood programs and services.

Recommendation 1 received the second most responses.

**Within *Raising the Bar*: Connecticut must establish ambitious, focused and coherent education standards in all major disciplines, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages and the arts, that are shared across the system and aligned with major assessments and instructional systems.**

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Recommendation 31 received the third most responses.

**Within *Start with Early Childhood*: The state should provide or reallocate funds, and alter policy to ensure programs are delivered with sufficient intensity and measurable success in children's language, reading and numeracy.** The availability of preschools and the quality of the preschool experience is a critical factor in reducing the achievement gap and ensuring that all children can benefit from their educational experiences. (A) Ensure fiscal support for high-quality preschools for all three- and four-year-olds. (B) Provide a challenging all-day kindergarten program to all children. (C) Support local communities in developing birth-through-age-eight local councils for planning and monitoring early childhood services.

Recommendation 77 received the fourth most responses.

**Within *Reform Leadership*: The role and responsibility of the Superintendent of Education should be clearly defined in state statutes.** The authority of the superintendent has to be commensurate with responsibilities. If there is to be effective leadership in the effort to transform schooling to a learner-centered system, there can be no ambiguity as to who is responsible for what. Those in leadership positions need to be empowered to meet their responsibilities. The statutory specifications regarding the position of Superintendent of Education must include the following: (A) The Superintendent answers to the district board. (B) The board makes decisions regarding policy matters, the annual budget and the hiring, supervision and evaluation of the Superintendent and nothing else. (C) The board can contract with the Superintendent for more than three years to increase the stability of leadership. If there is to be effective leadership in the effort to transform schooling, there must be coherence in the alignment of the authority and responsibility in a district. In addition, the board must be restricted in its activities to only those responsibilities that are related to the board's role as the representative body for the community that is served by the district. The Superintendent must have the discretion to lead and manage the district in accordance with the goals that have been set by the board for the district. Finally, effective leadership must have continuity and not be adversely affected by statutory limits. Without continuity of effective leadership, systemic district improvement is extremely difficult to achieve.

39. Overall, SDE is focused on the right policies and initiatives to improve the education system in Connecticut.

- a. strongly agree – (1.6%)
- b. agree – (31.7%)
- c. neutral – (40.7%)
- d. disagree – (22.0%)
- e. strongly disagree – (4.1%)

40. If you answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” what other policies or initiatives should be included on SDE's agenda?

Respondents: 20

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The most frequently cited recommendations and policies include:

- Recommendations from the CAPSS report
- Universal early childhood education
- Assessment reform
- Less policing and more collaboration from SDE
- More research based initiatives
- Stronger technology initiatives
- Be visionary and proactive, not reactive
- Teacher/administrator evaluation
- Take charge of the legislative agenda; do not let the legislators run the session
- Special Education reform
- Address the achievement gap
- Deregulate “successful” districts
- Better teacher preparation
- Revise ECS

## Technical Assistance and Funding

41. SDE’s technical assistance has helped our district identify and select curricular resources and instructional programs that are aligned with the Common Core Standards.

- a. strongly agree – (3.3%)
- b. agree – (32.0%)
- c. neutral – (33.6%)
- d. disagree – (24.6%)
- e. strongly disagree – (6.6%)

42. Has your district participated in the CALI program to improve organizational systems and enhance student learning?

- a. yes – (55.7%)
- b. no – (44.3%)

43. If your district has participated in the CALI program, how would you rate its effectiveness?

- a. very effective – (19.7%)
- b. effective – (51.5%)
- c. neutral – (28.8%)
- d. ineffective – (0.0%)
- e. very ineffective – (0.0%)

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44. Does SDE offer support to your district in utilizing allocated Title I and IDEA funds effectively?

- a. yes – (26.4%)
- b. somewhat – (47.9%)
- c. no – (25.6%)

45. How would you rate the fairness of the state's formulas for funding education?

- a. very fair – (0.8%)
- b. fair – (6.6%)
- c. neutral – (25.6%)
- d. unfair – (46.3%)
- e. very unfair – (20.7%)

46. How does the state's current education funding formula impact your ability to run your district effectively?

Respondents: 78

In general, superintendents think the funding formula does not adequately fund districts for the mandates they are required to meet:

- Special education requirements and mandates are increasing while the support for the districts is not matching the need.
- Small districts are not adequately funded based on the ECS grant allocations, even though this calculation should "result in equal aid to all districts, the result is frugal allocations for a tiny rural town."
- Rural and small districts have concerns about receiving less funding than urban districts due to ineligibility for certain grants.

### Innovation

47. SDE encourages me to create new and better ways to improve student learning.

- a. very often – (3.3%)
- b. often – (11.7%)
- c. sometimes – (41.7%)
- d. rarely – (35.0%)
- e. never – (8.3%)

48. SDE facilitates discussions that promote best practices.

- a. very often – (3.3%)
- b. often – (18.3%)

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- c. sometimes – (47.5%)
- d. rarely – (26.7%)
- e. never – (4.2%)

49. SDE has a record of helping districts turn around schools.

- a. yes – (2.5%)
- b. somewhat – (51.7%)
- c. no – (45.8%)

50. Do you think SDE is doing enough to advance the use of technology to improve student learning in schools?

- a. yes – (1.7%)
- b. somewhat – (24.2%)
- c. no – (74.2%)

51. I have the support and resources to create new schools in my district.

- a. yes – (10.8%)
- b. somewhat – (14.2%)
- c. no – (75.0%)

52. If you responded “somewhat” or “no,” what is needed to enable you to create new schools?

Respondents: 70

The common themes are noted below:

- The state should fully fund ECS and provide excess cost reimbursement. Ensure that money follows the student.
- Address collective bargaining and binding arbitration barriers.
- Support is needed from unions, boards of education, and the community.
- Professional development support and resources are lacking.
- Districts prefer less paperwork and additional waivers on regulations.
- School facilities and space are required to create new schools.

53. What school district in Connecticut do you believe serves as a model for your district and the state?

Respondents: 59

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- Seven superintendents referenced Farmington for its high expectations; quality teaching; standards-based, forward-thinking cooperative governance; and use of data.
- West Hartford was recognized by five respondents for its community support, extensive funding, and success with a diverse population and small class sizes. Respondents also noted that West Hartford has “right players in key positions.”
- Bristol and Bethel and New Haven each received three mentions.
- Westport, Hartford, Simsbury, and Madison each received two mentions.

54. If you had additional resources to reach your goals, how would you use these resources?

Respondents: 86

Although responses varied, superintendents representing urban, suburban and other districts identified similar ideas for using additional resources:

- **Provide quality early childhood education:** Recommendations include universal pre-school, full-day kindergarten, early childhood education centers, and a targeted focus on getting students to read at grade level by the end of kindergarten.
- **Expand or integrate technology infrastructure:** Superintendents noted technology funding is needed to provide tools, technology, and teachers to promote innovation and ensure 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Specific recommendations include smart boards, laptops in every classroom, and wireless school environments.
- **Extend the traditional school schedule:** Many suggested extending the hours within the school day, increasing the school year, and creating a year-round school schedule.
- **Improve instructional core and education leadership:** Examples include meaningful professional development, support for teachers, realigning or revising curriculum, and developing embedded formative assessments.
- Other ideas include creating smaller class sizes; multiple pathways to graduation; and programming for world languages, STEM, arts, and non-traditional learning experiences (e.g., independent study, online learning).

### Talent

55. As a superintendent, I utilize SDE as a resource for identifying talented individuals to fill positions within my district.

- a. very often – (0.8%)
- b. often – (3.3%)
- c. sometimes – (16.7%)

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- d. rarely – (35.8%)
- e. never – (43.3%)

56. Turnover of talented administrators and teachers in our district is a challenge.

- strongly agree – (6.7%)
- agree – (21.7%)
- neutral – (17.5%)
- disagree – (46.7%)
- strongly disagree – (7.5%)

57. If you answered “agree” or “strongly agree,” what are the causes of turnover?

Respondents: 25

Superintendents most mentioned more competitive salaries and benefits and career opportunities in other districts as common causes of turnover.

58. The state’s policies enable me to recognize and promote staff effectively in my district.

- a. yes – (14.2%)
- b. somewhat – (32.5%)
- c. no – (54.3%)

59. If you answered “somewhat” or “no,” how can the policies be improved?

Respondents: 57

- **Teacher and administrator contracts:** Fourteen districts commented on reform of teacher and administrator contracts. Seven called for reform of tenure rules and one noted that these rules make it costly to remove a tenured teacher and result in a waste of funds that could be used to educate students. Five called for state policies around teacher pay and one noted that districts are unable to reward their more talented staff members. One respondent mentioned modifications to seniority rules, and another said that contracts allow for far too much sick time and personal leave. One district requested that the state loosen the CEA’s grip on teacher pay and other reward systems. One district called for a move to a twelve month school year.
- **Certification:** Ten districts commented on the Department’s certification policies. Respondents noted that the certification requirements are too strict and that districts have difficulty certifying out-of-state teachers. Certifications are so specific by content area or grade level that administrators are limited in how they can best use their staff. Districts also said that rigid administrator certification requirements limit leadership opportunities and the likelihood of a teacher

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pursuing an administrator role. The “teacher leader” requirement affects staff from small districts negatively. One district called for more creativity and imagination in the certification requirements for teachers, principals, and superintendents.

- **State guidance on evaluations:** Six districts requested more guidance from the Department in the areas of teacher and administrator evaluations. The districts asked for documents that provide metrics to measure administrator growth and offer an overview of state initiatives and legislation. Respondents also asked for an updated document on teacher evaluation that would include rubrics and a specific definition of “effectiveness.” One district suggested that new levels of teacher leadership be created such as master teacher or curriculum specialist. One district requested that the evaluation model be created without influence by CEA.
- **Other comments:** One superintendent called for a revision of substitute policies and said that since policies require a certified teacher for coverage of over forty days, districts are tempted to move less qualified substitutes in and out of districts for periods of thirty nine days or less. Two respondents requested more resources to pay administrators and to maintain professional development and facilities. One district requested a separate survey on bullying laws.

60. The state’s policies enable me to remove staff who are not effective in their roles.

- yes – (12.5%)
- somewhat – (38.3%)
- no – (49.2%)

61. If you answered “somewhat” or “no,” describe how the policies are a barrier to removing staff.

Respondents: 67

- **Tenure:** Approximately 65% of the respondents to this question identified tenure as a barrier.

62. SDE has articulated a clear plan to help attract, retain, and develop teachers and administrators for Connecticut schools.

- strongly agree – (0.0%)
- agree – (7.5%)
- neutral – (37.5%)
- disagree – (37.5%)
- strongly disagree – (17.5%)



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63. SDE's teacher and administrator certification requirements enable qualified teachers to enter our education system.

- strongly agree – (4.2%)
- agree – (44.2%)
- neutral – (27.5%)
- disagree – (18.3%)
- strongly disagree – (5.8%)

64. If your response to the previous question is “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” how should certification requirements be revised to ensure qualified teachers can get positions in our schools?

Respondents: 23

- **Classroom effectiveness vs. certification:** Teachers should be assessed more on their effectiveness in the classroom rather than certification, credits earned, or years in the classroom.
- **Certification issues:** Simplify certification requirements and encourage reciprocity with other states, particularly for urban districts. Certification requirements should be easier to understand and the number of years for which certification is valid should be reduced. Increase rigor of certification programs to address common core standards, diversity, and hard-to-reach students. One respondent questioned whether empirical evidence links certification with teacher excellence.
- **Role of SDE:** The certification team should be more supportive in recruiting highly qualified candidates identified by districts, and focus less on mandates and paperwork.

65. Existing education programs adequately prepare new teachers so that they don't have to learn key skills and approaches on the job.

- strongly agree – (0.8%)
- agree – (18.3%)
- neutral – (28.3%)
- disagree – (35.0%)
- strongly disagree – (17.5%)

66. Existing education programs adequately prepare new administrators so that they don't have to learn key skills and approaches on the job.

- strongly agree – (0.8%)
- agree – (21.7%)
- neutral – (30.8%)

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- disagree – (32.5%)
- strongly disagree – (14.2%)

67. Continuing education requirements align with the needs of our district's teachers.

- strongly agree – (0.8%)
- agree – (32.5%)
- neutral – (35.0%)
- disagree – (26.7%)
- strongly disagree – (5.0%)

68. Continuing education requirements align with the needs of our district's administrators.

- strongly agree – (0.8%)
- agree – (38.3%)
- neutral – (33.3%)
- disagree – (21.7%)
- strongly disagree – (5.8%)

69. How would you describe your district's personnel evaluation procedures?

- very effective – (5.8%)
- effective – (32.5%)
- neutral – (32.5%)
- ineffective – (27.5%)
- very ineffective – (1.7%)

70. If you answered "ineffective" or "very ineffective," what additional data or tools are required to more accurately and fairly evaluate teachers and administrators?

Respondents: 28

Superintendents expressed interest in a statewide evaluation plan that includes guidance in areas such as teacher and administrator growth plans, performance, attendance, attire and professional attitude. The plan should be piloted before a full release and customized to meet the needs of small districts.

Administrators should regularly provide feedback to teachers on their performance and provide teachers scheduled time to complete development. The evaluation should be computer-based and allow an evaluator to provide feedback on standards-based instructional quality and student engagement.

Respondents also referenced the following issues and ideas: financial support; classroom-settings for on-site evaluation; linking teacher tenure with performance and

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standards of district and students every five years; and teacher willingness and openness.

## Political Climate

71. Our district's school board is focused on the right things and delegates the right amount of discretion to me.

- strongly agree – (22.2%)
- agree – (47.9%)
- neutral – (12.8%)
- disagree – (12.0%)
- strongly disagree – (5.1%)

72. Do you think there is consensus among stakeholders in your district about the need to improve student achievement?

- yes – (59.0%)
- somewhat – (29.9%)
- no – (11.1%)

73. Are local politics a positive, neutral, or negative factor in helping achieve your goals?

- positive – (22.2%)
- neutral – (35.0%)
- negative – (42.7%)

74. How can the state help create political will and alleviate political barriers at the local level?

Respondents: 71

- **Funding:** Among the comments was the point that the funding formula should be revised to reduce reliance on local property taxes. State contributions should range from 50% - 85%. The state should have more control over finances so that districts become fiscally independent of local governments. Unfunded mandates should be prohibited and the budget should shift to a biennial cycle.
- **Local boards of education:** Some respondents recommend a state statute to define the role of the superintendent and the board, including a training requirement for board members. Respondents think the board should be independent of the local government.
- **State accountability / reform:** SDE should communicate its priorities and expectations of districts to districts, boards, legislators, and other stakeholders, as

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recommended by some respondents. The state should be more proactive and with reform and promote school choice more. A new governance model should be adopted.

- **Other comments include:** The State should consider redistricting to create larger school systems, similar to Florida, which could achieve cost savings. Other respondents commented on local politicians' interests in maintaining local control and the state's need to fix its own problems first.

75. Overall, SDE is responsive to my questions and concerns.

- strongly agree – (5.1%)
- agree – (51.3%)
- neutral – (30.8%)
- disagree – (8.5%)
- strongly disagree – (4.3%)

76. What other comments would you like to share regarding the State Department of Education or your district?

Respondents: 42

- **Appreciation for SDE:** Several respondents expressed appreciation for the efforts and talents of SDE staff and referenced the downsizing of the Department over several years. They noted the SDE previously had capacity to offer services it is no longer able to provide districts (e.g., curriculum consultants, professional development assistance, enrollment projections). Respondents also expressed their thanks for being asked to provide their opinion through the survey since superintendents have much experience and knowledge to offer.
- **SDE leadership:** SDE can become a leader by setting clear goals for reform, being bold, and taking a collaborative approach with districts. Some respondents urged SDE to become proactive and stop being a “functionary of the Legislature.”
- **Other comments include:** The state should change how schools are funded, fully fund the excessive cost grant, and stop unfunded mandates. Respondents criticized and supported SDE's focus on priority and urban districts. Superintendents also provided support for the statements and actions of the Governor, SDE Commissioner and the CAPSS proposal.